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Danger in the Canal Zone

Color-blind Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chairman J. William Fulbright, with an assist from Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, is powerfully sponsoring behind the scenes another giveaway to the glee of the Reds. This plum involves the great Panama Canal.

Led by able Rep. Daniel J. Flood, D-Pa., more than 100 congressmen publicly protest any major concessions to shaky dictator Gen. Omar Torrijó's Republic of Panama regarding the U.S. Canal Zone. Fortunately, these protesters have some force. A new treaty with Torrijó requires approval only by the Senate, not by the House. But changes in the U.S. Canal Zone's sovereignty would require House approval because the House votes the funds for the canal's operations.

Behind closed doors, and with our public uninformed, Senators Fulbright and Kennedy are urging that Panama get greater income from our canal, control of our zone's collateral land and water areas, and that U.S. businesses in our zone be replaced by Panamanian enterprises. Sitting like presiding Buddhas, both confidently say they can handle its Senate passage.

OUR TAXPAYERS have invested more than \$5 billion in the Canal Zone and this giveaway package is bad enough, but it is only a part of what should be called a Red blackmail and exposed as such.

Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Elmo R. Zumwalt Jr. could review the great canal's global strategic importance with his eyes shut. So could the general staffs of the world. Moreover, in Latin-American terms, about 80 per cent of Peru's and Chile's imports and exports pass through it, with equivalent dependency on the canal among the entire Pacific side of the continent.

Certainly, the Fulbright-Kennedy pair should know, for everybody knows, that Panama (population 1.4 million) is chaotic — and is a lightning rod for Red assaults. Did they not find anything instructive in the January, 1964, riots when Red wreckers contrived a devastating, full-scale attack against our Canal Zone and brutally killed four U.S. soldiers?

The attack was led by Cuba-trained Panamanian Communist Thelma King who precipitated the iron-fisted demands which these senators are sponsoring today.

THEY MUST KNOW ALSO that Panama is still

a faction-ridden political jungle. Its demagogues of all stripes (including Torrijó) employ the canal to pressure-cook the population, realizing full well that more than half of Panama's true need is for betterment in agriculture and animal husbandry and the development of light industry.

It's easier for the Panamanian demagogues to roar at the United States — the country's only feeding hand.

These senators should know, too, that Guatemala, El Salvador, the Dominican Republic, Haiti, Honduras and Colombia, which border Panama, are likewise chaotic.

COLOMBIA PRESIDENT Misael Pastrana Borrero, enforcing martial law, has told our CIA that there are Castro-backed infiltrators by the thousand in Colombia's universities, communications media, transportation facilities and trade unions. The police actually discovered clandestine weapons being manufactured in Colombia's Ministry of Public Works in Bogota.

Guatemala President Carlos Arana Orio told the CIA: "We have been in a state of siege for nearly five years, with no end in sight."

The Dominican Republic, where only our landing of 14,000 American troops stopped a Red takeover a few years ago, nervously remains an armed camp.

I DINED IN NEW YORK with Nicaragua President Anastasio Somoza Debayle. He told me: "Castro has made 22 armed attempts to invade Nicaragua."

Except for Nicaragua, our 10-mile-wide Canal Zone is the only zone of stability in the region. All Communists see this situation with the forbearance of a fox in a henhouse.

It is tragically ironic that we should give abroad \$148 billion in economic aid, support NATO in Europe 3,500 miles away and have fought in Vietnam 9,000 miles away to contain Communist expansionism, while we allow ourselves to be talked out of the secure Canal Zone and Panama Canal in our own back yard.

The real question is not the surrender of U.S. sovereignty in the U.S. control of the great canal versus Panamanian control. It is U.S. control which the facts have been withheld will support versus Communist control.

We can only hope that an alarmed public from Rep. Flood's House group and blow the Fulbright-Kennedy Senate putsch right out of the water.

Revolutionary Priest

The Complete Writings and Messages of Camilo Torres.
 Edited and with an introduction by
 John Gerassi.
 460 pp. New York:
 Random House. \$10.

By MAURICE ZEITLIN

Fidel Castro remarked that "the Communists in Latin America have become theologians and the theologians Communists." His aphorism has enough truth in it to trouble the ruling classes and confound the State Department and C.I.A. In the innards of the Roman Catholic Church, an institution which above all has been the rampart of the existing order in Latin America, there has appeared a movement of new priests preaching the gospel of socialist revolution in the language of Christianity. None is more exemplary of that movement than Camilo Torres, the Colombian priest who was killed in the mountains of Bucaramanga by Government troops, on Feb. 15, 1966, four months after joining the guerrillas of the Army of National Liberation.

Camilo was a rare man: priest, professor, agitator and organizer and, for an all too brief moment in his life, guerrilla fighter. In the space of not more than three years of practical political activity, drawn as he was into the vortex of the social struggle from his position as chaplain and professor of sociology at the National University of Bogotá, he forged an alliance of new political forces in Colombia that promised to develop an overwhelming mass following. It was a movement calling for profound changes, which was endowed with the charisma of Catholicism and of Camilo's own extraordinary personal qualities. It took religious dogma, in the most Catholic of countries, and made it a philosophical force that undermined and subverted the status quo rather than upholding it, that legitimized, nay compelled, revolutionary action.

He was accused of being a Communist, but few doubted the authenticity of his denial although he stated that he was "prepared to fight together with the Communists for common goals: against the oligarchy and United States domination; for the winning of power by the people."

Harassed by police and Government agents, falsely attacked by his

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own church hierarchy for abandoning Catholic doctrines, vilified by the press and living in fear of assassination, he continued to act publicly in accordance with his conscience and his concept of the Christian mission. Torn between his vows as a priest and his political commitments, and ordered to abandon either his cause or the priesthood, he chose reduction to lay status. He continued, however, to regard himself as a priest, and was known, wherever he went, as "Padre Camilo."

Camilo's decision "to continue the struggle, arms in hand, until power has been won by the people," came when he felt he could not be effective in public political life, and his death at the hands of Government agents if he remained above ground seemed certain. His decision followed also from his conception of the revolution as a historical necessity, a Christian imperative and an unavoidable personal commitment. "The revolution," he told a rally of union leaders and workers a few months before joining the guerrillas, "demands that we act, whatever the ultimate consequences. The revolutionary struggle is not just any struggle—it is not a commitment of a few hours or a few pesos. It is a struggle to which it is necessary to commit one's life." (Translation by this reviewer.)

Camilo's conclusion that a socialist revolution was necessary "so that the hungry may be fed, the thirsty given drink, and the naked clothed—and to bring about the well-being of the majority of our people" reflected his deepening understanding of the intimate embrace between the Colombian state, the ruling class and United States corporations. His credo that "the revolutionary struggle is a priestly and Christian struggle," was both a moral and analytical summary of the situation in Colombia.

Agitator, organizer, guerrilla, as well as cleric

him to join the armed struggle to break that embrace. In the course of his political activity, he came to realize that his people's misery was rooted in Colombia's peculiarly retrograde form of dependent capitalism.

Unfortunately this realization did not come early enough to inform his scholarly work, and it is scarcely reflected in his sociological articles, though the ideas are there in his published agitational "messages" and his political program. In general, while Camilo did important empirical research on the conditions of the workers and peasants and was occasionally brilliant and often insightful, his articles were limited by the same liberal ideological framework imposed on sociological theory in the United States.

Had he the chance to continue his work as a scholar—rather than engaging in a struggle against a ruling class that even the "U.S. Army Area Handbook on Colombia" recognizes is ready to "unleash bitter and indeed brutal behavior" against "a genuine threat to class interest"—Camilo would probably have gone on to analyze the generic source of Colombia's retarded development in her quasi-colonial status. While Camilo dubbed his country "the dependent republic of Colombia," his own essays barely touch upon the interconnection between the impoverishment and suffering of his people and Colombia's subordinate relationship to the advanced capitalist countries.

Colombia is dependent on the United States for the bulk of her export market (primarily coffee and petroleum) and her imports, mainly durable consumer, semimanufactured and capital goods. The over 300 United States corporations operating in Colombia, whose known investments amount to some \$700-million, together with the banks and lending agencies on which Colombia is financially dependent, share a mutual interest with the Colombian ruling class in maintaining the existing order. Between 1962 and 1966, under United States Government auspices, a systematic campaign of liquidation was